

Mr. Clean

✖ My wife Amy is a Boston Red Sox fan. Strangely, she's never been to Boston. In her defense, when you grow up in Oklahoma where there are no Major League teams, I suppose you've got to root for somebody.

So needless to say, she thought it was pretty cool when I had the chance to interview one of Boston's star pitchers Justin Masterson for a Fellowship of Christian Athletes baseball New Testament.

Masterson is one of the more impressive athletes I've been privileged to meet in recent years. He somehow managed to survive growing up as a preacher's kid (I can say that because I was one too) and resisted the temptation to sow his oats as a teenager and young adult.

They call him "Mr. Clean" because of his shaved head, but you could argue the nickname is just as apropos when talking about his rock-solid commitment to a high standard of biblically-based moral living. He doesn't have any gory tales of drug addiction, alcohol abuse or sexual deviance that serve as the basis for his testimony.

Nope. Masterson has simply walked in grace and set an impeccable example for those around him to follow. Is the guy perfect? I seriously doubt it. But it's refreshing, nonetheless, to see a professional athlete who can back up his words (which are actually fairly sparse compared to others) with actions that are dripping with godly integrity.

That's because Masterson has an eternal perspective that so many of us struggle to embrace. I would imagine making

millions of dollars and receiving all the perks that comes with playing professional sports might make that difficult for some. Yet here's a guy who truly gets it.

"I could have woke up today, maybe slept on my arm wrong, and never be able to pitch again," Masterson recently told me. "If I'm not okay with that, then for me, I think that would be a problem. Not that I don't want to play anymore, but there are so many more important things to me than the game of baseball. There's my faith and my wife and those types of things. But for me it's just appreciating every day that you're given."

Another indication of Masterson's character shines through one of his favorite Bible verses found in Matthew 22:37-39 where Jesus says, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.(NIV)"

"I love that verse because Jesus tells us plain and simple I want you to love God with all that you are and to love people," Masterson explained. "If you do those things your mind and will and actions will be moving in the right direction towards God."

Those are pretty wise words for a 24-year old baseball superstar playing in one of the league's biggest markets on one the country's most popular teams. Thank God for young men like Masterson who are showing sports fans and other athletes alike that it's still possible to fulfill the calling of 1 Peter 1:15: "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."

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authored several books including a four-book FCA series (Regal Books) and is the coordinating producer on a forthcoming documentary called Choosing Life.